



Town of Sheffield

Planning Board

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Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 2015, 7:00 PM

TOWN HALL – 2nd FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Planning Board Members Present:
David A. Smith, Sr.

James T. Collingwood Jr., Chair

Anthony Gulotta
Daniel Watson
Marie Massini-Reynolds

Members of the Public Present:

Brent Getchell, Fire Chief
Arthur J. Batacchi Jr.
Thomas Carmody, Building Inspector
Don Ward

Review of Concerns Regarding Solar Projects:

Chair, J. Collingwood Jr., asked Fire Chief Brent Getchell if he has concerns regarding installation of solar panels in Sheffield. They discussed limiting accessibility to panels for safety, particularly to protect children and animals.

A. Gulotta mentioned that the Cheshire bylaw requires solar installers to cooperate with all local public safety officials. In Sheffield he would like to mandate that solar installers review a safety plan with the appropriate town officials, such as the Fire and Police Chiefs.

M. Massini Reynolds asked if the new bylaw should refer to Massachusetts General Law. Building Inspector, Tom Carmody, said that the bylaws already need to comply with Massachusetts Law.

Tom Carmody reviewed the Cheshire Solar Bylaw line by line with the Board Members, giving his opinion on parts that should be re-written for Sheffield. The general consensus that emerged from the discussion was that solar installations in Sheffield should be regulated by the process of reviewing a Special Permit.

The question was raised as to whether security measures are the responsibility of the Planning Board. The Board thought that required screening and security could be handled under the Special Permit Process. The Board reviewed requirements that would be redundant if made part of the Sheffield bylaws.

Art Battachi addressed the Board and said that he is glad to see something's being done because all of Sheffield will be covered with solar panels if nothing is done.

Don Ward asked about the maximum percent of lot coverage and wondered if all impervious surfaces would be included in the maximum percent lot coverage. He asked if the town of Sheffield has such a regulation. Tom Carmody said yes, but in Sheffield it is called lot coverage and it only counts buildings and structures, does not include asphalt. He said that structures can't cover more than 25% of the land in some districts, 75% and 50% in other districts. Don Ward said he understood that Sheffield doesn't regulate "impervious surfaces." He thought that all solar installations exceed 25% lot coverage, but Tom Carmody said that all of the installations cover 25% of the lot or less. Don Ward said that impermeability is regulated by the State of Massachusetts, it does not need to be regulated by the town. Tom Carmody said that the panels are considered impervious surfaces. Don Ward suggested that we get feedback from the Cheshire Building Inspector about how their solar bylaw is working now and continue to work with and give feedback to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

M. Massini-Reynolds asked how the Board would want section 10.2.a of the Cheshire Bylaw written. A. Gulotta said that it should be written so that it would not discriminate against a two family dwelling, any bigger and the facility would be commercial, but he thought the bylaw has to include two family homes.

Mail:

- The Board received a draft copy of their yearly Annual Report and were asked to give input on any needed changes. ***D. Smith Sr. made a Motion to approve the article as written for the Town's Annual Report. A. Gulotta seconded his Motion and the Motion was unanimously approved.***
- The Board received a notice that reimbursement for gas mileage has been raised to .575 cents per mile.
- The letter that Rene Wood drafted for the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Block Grant was signed and sent.

Minutes: ***D. Smith Sr. made a Motion to approve the Public Hearing Minutes of January 14, 2015 as amended. M. Massini-Reynolds seconded his Motion and the Motion was approved unanimously.***

D. Smith Sr. made a Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2015 as amended. D. Watson seconded his Motion and the Motion was approved unanimously.

Bylaw Review Committee: A. Gulotta explained that he resigned from the Bylaw Review Committee. He pointed out that any proposed bylaws would have to go to a public hearing where anyone could have input.

Town Meeting Warrants: J. Collingwood Jr. explained that the Planning Board will not have anything on the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting in March. Proposed changes to the bylaws by the Planning Board will be on the Warrant in May. The Board agreed that their priority is solar. D. Watson's project has been put on hold, but he agrees that the solar is a priority.

Smart Meters: J. Collingwood Jr. said that Nina Anderson is asking for copies of Planning Board minutes because she wants to understand the Board's rationale for not endorsing her proposed Moratorium on Smart Meters. The Board discussed that fact that what Ms. Anderson proposed didn't meet a real need for Sheffield at this time.

At 8:40, A. Gulotta made a Motion to adjourn the regular meeting. D. Smith Sr. seconded his Motion and the Motion was approved unanimously.

The next Planning Board meeting will be Wednesday, February 25th, 2015

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nadia Milleron".

Nadia Milleron
Secretary to the Planning Board